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MILITARISM AND THE CHURCH

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We have in our midst a certain inchoate institution in this country which we call the Church. We have in that Church an investment of something like \$2,000,000,000 and we spend every year in its support between \$200,000,000,000 and \$300,000,000,000. It therefore has an economic existence if none other. This institution is based upon certain principles which it declares to be divine underlying principles of human life. It claims to have a commission from the Creator of the Universe, the Author of human life, to teach these principles as necessary to the happiness and even the being of humanity. It takes in a large and a most important area of human thought and feeling; that all of this should have been so completely ignored by the arguments of militarists is most significant, and we ask ourselves whether it is indeed a fact that the Christian Church, and with it the Christian religion, has ceased to exist as a factor in the life of the people of the United States.

The militarist's idea is in direct contradiction to the fundamental postulates of Christian teaching. The military method makes physical force the ultimate means of settling disputes between the different nations. According to this method, each nation must always be prepared to resent injuries. It is to go armed with this in mind all the time. It is as if a private individual were to arm himself upon the supposition that every man in the street is hostile to him and desires his injury, so that he must be ready at every moment of his life to the full extent of his ability to resent such injuries. And he is to resent them by the use of physical force because it is physical force of which he is afraid. This is the fundamental thought of all militarism.

One hardly needs to say that just the opposite of this is the foundation principle of that great institution known as the Christian Church. The pacifist comes in for the sneer and the scorn of the militarist on the supposition that he does not believe in force. But just the contrary is the case; the pacifist has faith in force as well

as the militarist, but he believes that there is a force stronger than physical force. The moral forces of the universe are at his command, and he fights, not with his sword or his gun, but with his reason and his conscience. He believes that man is a reasonable and a moral being and in the ultimate is open to conviction, both as to the wisdom and the rightfulness of his action. Therefore, the pacifist lays primary stress upon moral and spiritual preparation and only minor stress on mere physical preparation.

The second emphasis of militarism is on enmity. We are the natural enemies of other nations and they our natural foes. As soon as we organize as a group, that separates us from our fellowmen, and those fellowmen of ours in opposite groups are watching to see how they can come at us and take advantage of us and spoil our goods. It is this principle of natural enmity that is insisted on in season and out of season by those who are preaching military preparedness. Now unless I am mistaken entirely as to the constitution of that great organization known as the Christian Church, this thought of enmity is utterly opposed to all that it stands for. It lays stress not upon enmity but upon friendship. The Founder of Christianity said: "Ye have heard it said of old times, thou shall love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, love thine enemy." Now in old times, in the days of undeveloped humanity every stranger was an enemy. Every man who lived outside the city gates was lawful prey.

But Christianity had come when that condition of society was outworn and the human race ready for a higher stage of existence; when friendship and not enmity was to become the natural and acknowledged relation of human beings. Enmity is the strange thing, friendship the ordinary; and this principle Christianity applies to groups as well as to individuals. The nations are the natural friends of the nations. Germany is no one's natural enemy; it is everyone's natural friend. It has to make itself an enemy by violence. Now if one makes himself our enemy that is his lookout not ours; we stand on our fundamental principle that he is our friend, no matter what he may do. That is essential to the continuance of his spiritual life and ours. The great institution which is here in our midst representing our spiritual and moral life, expending vast sums of money, officered by more than 200,000 men, insists upon love and not hate as the primary condition of life, and yet as we

have seen, this institution and its teaching have been utterly ignored in the arguments of the militarists.

There is a third principle at the base of militarism which declares that we must continually prepare against future and contingent evils. Our present preparedness campaign is directed not against actualities but only against remote probabilities which are in fact hardly more than mere possibilities. Now there is no thought more wasteful of human energy than this, and it is a thought utterly condemned by the teaching of Christianity. The Founder of Christianity said "take no thought for the morrow, the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself, sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

It may be said that fully one-half of human energy has been thrown away because men have acted contrary to the saying of Jesus, and the American people today are in great fear where no fear is. Never in our whole history were we so safe from anything like foreign invasion as we are at the present moment. The only two sources of danger suggested to us are Germany and Japan. At this moment both Germany and Japan are so occupied nearer home that they have neither the means nor the way to undertake so stupendous a task as the conquest of the American republic. Conditions in Mexico may—if they are not handled with wisdom—make of the American republic a conquering nation, but there is from that quarter not the slightest danger of conquest.

All this wild cry for military preparedness has its source, very largely, in the wishes of those who desire that the American republic shall be a conquering nation, and be based upon the imperialistic and not the democratic conception of life and government. The American people will have far more to fear from a large military establishment of their own than from any military establishment outside their borders.

One thing seems evident, the American people must either abandon their religion and dismantle their churches, or else they must use their religion and their churches to curb the present tendency to return frankly and openly to the conditions antecedent to the preaching of Christianity. Our choice lies between Christ and Caesar.